EXPERIENCES FROM THE COASTAL AND MARINE WIKI: AN INTERNET ENCYCLOPAEDIA PROVIDING UP-TO-DATE QUALITY INFORMATION FOR AND BY COASTAL AND MARINE PROFESSIONALS

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The Coastal and Marine Wiki (www.coastalwiki.org) is an Internet encyclopaedia providing up-to-date high quality information for coastal and marine professionals, which is continuously improved, complemented and updated by expert users. The Coastal Wiki was developed within the framework of the European Network for Coastal Research, ENCORA. Main difference between the Coastal and Marine Wiki and the online Wikipedia are the procedures to maintain the quality, consistency and comprehensiveness of the information. This resulted in the requirement of an editing authorisation for contributors. Anonymous contributions are precluded; authors and co-authors of articles or article revisions are explicitly acknowledged. The access to the Coastal and Marine Wikipedia is free to any coastal and marine stakeholder, but only experts registered in the Wiki Contact Database are entitled to enter new information. This contact database has been developed in house and is managed at the Flanders Marine Institute. Editing authorisations are granted only to users with a professional background, checked by the editorial team. This team also oversees the overall quality of the Coastal and Marine Wikipedia. The Coastal and Marine Wiki targets professionals who are either generalist who need to update their knowledge about a broad range of subjects or specialists who need to gain an understanding of other sectors or disciplines in order to work in an integrated manner. Besides the internal linking, similar Wiki Articles can also be grouped together using different categories. The combination of internal linking and categorisation allows creating a web of linked information that can be organised and accessed in several ways. Recently, SPICOSA (Science and Policy Integration for Coastal System Assessment) and MarBEF (Marine biodiversity and ecosystem functioning), two Coastal and Marine European projects, decided to contribute their project results to the Coastal and Marine Wiki. In this way the major outcomes of their research will be reflected in the Coastal and Marine Wiki enhancing the knowledge dissemination and integration of their project-specific information. At the moment, the Coastal and Marine Wiki is already used in several research curricula throughout Europe. Currently the Coastal Wiki contains about 1,200 information pages, has 300 registered editors and receives about 12,000 unique visitors a month.

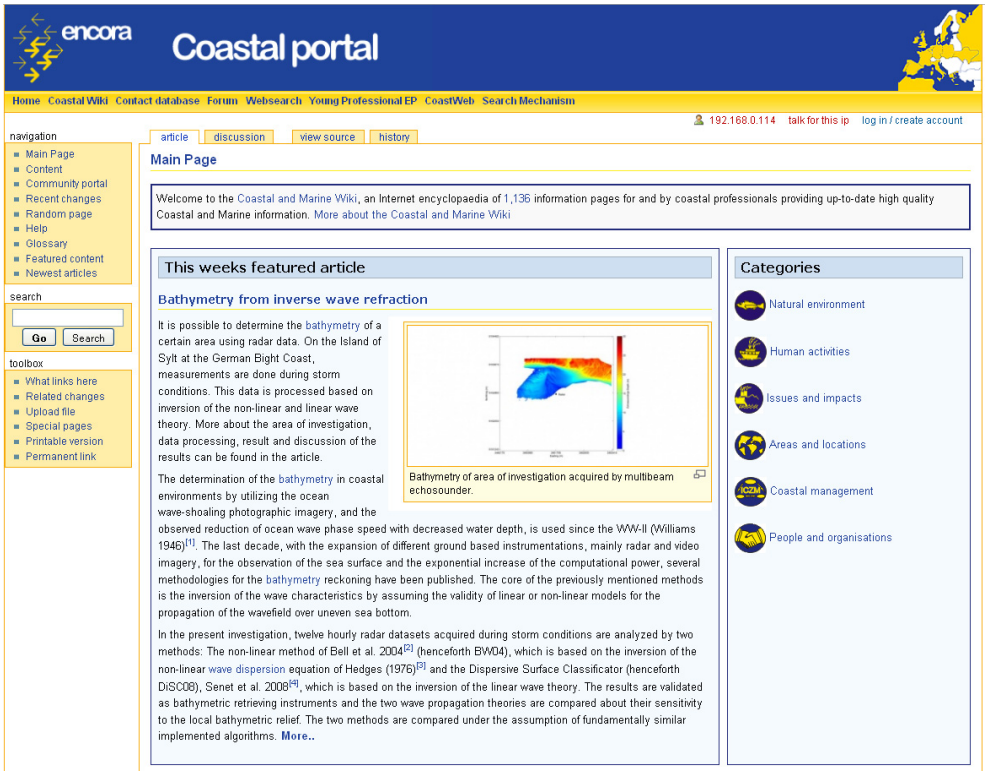

Fig. 1. The Coastal and Marine Wiki (http://www.coastalwiki.org).